

STAR WARS®

ROLEPLAYING GAME

With the Band

A Free *Star Wars* Miniadventure
For Any Era

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"With the Band" is a *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* miniadventure for four heroes of 9th level. The era-independent scenario takes place well outside the bounds of what most would consider polite society. The current political situation in your campaign matters very little, except insofar as you elect to tie the Gamemaster characters in this adventure to your ongoing storyline.

"With the Band" can be modified for heroes of higher level by increasing skill check DCs by one point for every level the average hero exceeds 9 and by making the crowd more violent. By default, the crowd at a Distraction concert is only prone to violence against one another, though you are always free to have them act against the heroes as is cinematically appropriate. For a greater challenge for groups well above 9th level, feel free to include a particularly vicious gang in the crowd (using the stats for mid-level pirates from the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook).

"With the Band" can be modified for characters of lower level by minimizing the involvement of the crowd, lowering skill check DCs proportional to average character level, and reducing Cories's VP. Note that logistical issues (such as payment) are intentionally left vague; shape the rewards to what is appropriate in your era and game.

Background

Niklas Cories is young and flashy, the son of a prominent Outer Rim businessman. He is also rapidly becoming one of the most feared assassins in the galaxy. When he makes a hit, people know—but it's often unclear exactly who his target was, since Cories's favored means of execution is the (rather indiscriminate) thermal detonator. He has left a trail of bodies all around the Outer Rim, but his precise whereabouts remain unknown.

Cories has been doing what any young, insane aristocrat might do. He's been traveling with a musical group called "Distraction," a curious mix of individuals described in Scene 1. Over the past several months, he has ingratiated himself with the band's manager, Zim Zimley, and been put on the payroll under the assumed name "Aphus Polix." He's done everything from hauling gear to working the door to singing backup, and he's fed his pathological need for violence in perhaps the safest of all venues—the pits where concert-goers fling themselves about to Distraction's discordant, morose music.

While Cories has managed to avoid full-blown thermal detonators for a few weeks, the last one he used was at a Distraction show, and several other concert-goers have died from much smaller explosives that somehow ended up in their pockets. In the meantime, he's been stockpiling thermal detonators and plans to exact a long-awaited revenge when Distraction plays an upcoming show on the Hutt-owned yacht, *Sleemo Poya Jeedai* (roughly, "The Drooling Jedi").

Cories has a long-standing grudge against the Hutts, who have a number of contracts out on his head. However, Cories is more concerned with a certain audience member who'll be in attendance, a 16-year-old Human girl named Aquella Firth. She once dated Cories, dismissing him when

she rightly decided that she was too young and Cories was too dangerous. But now he's determined to make her pay for the pain she inflicted on him. The show on *Sleemo Poya Jeedai* is in her home system, and Cories arranged for her to win tickets, certain that she'd want to go.

The girl's father, Quoltus Firth, is less convinced of the cultural value of a Distraction show. More importantly, he knows his daughter's history with Niklas Cories, and he has been doing his best to track down the insane aristocrat. But Quoltus made the mistake of forbidding Aquella to go to the Distraction concert without telling her that he suspected Cories might be there. When he went to her room to explain his reasoning, he found her gone. That was two nights ago. He hasn't found her yet, but he knows where she will be soon. Now Quoltus needs someone to take temporary employment with Distraction to watch out for his daughter's safety. He's confident that Cories has been traveling with the band, and he wants the man kept as far away from his daughter as possible. He knows that Aquella will return on her own and doesn't want anyone to drag her home; he just wants her safe.

Note that this general backstory can be applied to GM characters who already exist in your campaign. Giving existing GM characters children does wonders to flesh out the experience for the players.

Getting the Heroes Involved

Quoltus Firth was once a singer/musician who went into event promotions and management before retiring to raise a family in the Outer Rim. He remains somewhat involved in the industry, always keeping an eye out for new talent, and as a result he knows a great many people in the Astal Sector, where he's made his home. He doesn't broker information, but he has access to a great deal of it; even in retirement, there are still those to whom he owes favors, or who owe favors to him. Now, Firth has called in one of those favors, either from the heroes or from someone with whom they've worked in the past.

Firth explains the situation in very straightforward terms. His daughter has run off to a concert that he forbade her to attend. Normally, that wouldn't be a big deal, but he has reason to believe that the assassin Niklas Cories has been tracking (or traveling with) the band she's going to see, a mish-mash group known as "Distraction." He doesn't think much of their music and thinks even less of Cories, whom Aquella dated for a very short period of time last year and then dumped. He doesn't want his daughter brought back; he just wants the heroes to make sure nothing happens to her at the concert. The trick is, they can't let her know they're present.

Firth has pulled some strings to get them assigned as on-site security personnel for the band. Zim Zimley, the band's manager, is a Bith who believes he is employing special security personnel to resolve a favor he owes Quoltus, and he has no knowledge of any real danger involved. The heroes should expect to be treated no differently by Zimley than he would treat any other security guards on special duty.

Firth gives the heroes a picture of Cories. The man is young and handsome, a Human with olive skin and a ready

smile. He looks to be around 18 years old, though no one actually knows his date of birth. He's of middle build and is around 1.8 meters tall. Quoltus expects that Cories will get close enough to plant explosives on his daughter (or someone she's with), but no closer. If pressed, Quoltus admits that the yacht *Sleemo Poya Jeedai* is Hutt-owned, but that the Hutts themselves merely rent the extravagant ship for spectacles like this one. Hutt employees may be on board, but unless the ship itself is in danger, they will do nothing to protect the concert-goers.

The heroes may be sent to Quoltus by a GM character with whom they are already acquainted. The reason for the introduction can be anything at all. For example, if the heroes need something from a Hutt, the price can be doing this job for Quoltus, to whom the Hutt owes a debt. If the heroes want to convince a hidden Jedi Master of their worthiness, he may have sent them to Quoltus as a test. If the heroes are bounty hunters, they may have heard of (or be tracking) Cories and find an ideal means of engaging him through this employment opportunity.

Ultimately, you have a lot of flexibility. Use the elements of this adventure that work best with your campaign, and if something doesn't fit, just remember that you are the GM, and if you don't like it, it doesn't happen.

Scene 1: Meet the Band

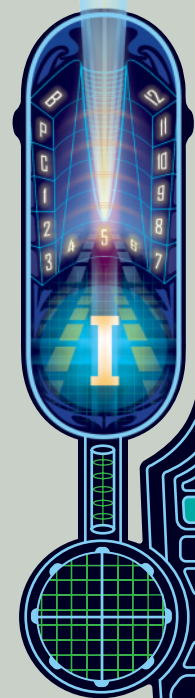
Whenever new security personnel are hired by Distraction's management, they are required to meet the band. This serves two purposes. First, it allows them to see whom they will be protecting and to become acquainted with the likely behavior of the various band members. Second, it lets the band know who they should turn to if things go bad. The musicians have a cadre of security personnel who travel with them, but they recognize the need to know all of the individuals who will be protecting their lives.

You dock with the *Sleemo Poya Jeedai* eight standard hours prior to the concert's scheduled start time. Already, a swarm of ships hover around the enormous yacht, waiting for a chance to dock and offload their passengers. Some of the ships bob and weave dangerously, and more than a few of them bump up against the hull of the yacht before spinning off and righting themselves.

You are met at the airlock by a trio of Trandoshans, each of whom wears a blaster pistol on both hips. Form-fitting body armor covers their torsos. They check your credentials and motion for you to follow.

After a few twists and turns, you arrive at a triple-sized blast door. One of the Trandoshans steps forward and enters a combination in a keypad to the right of the door. The doors slide open. Then the doors behind them slide open. Then two more sets of doors slide open before you finally see five individuals seated in thick chairs, watching as you step across the threshold.

Of course, the heroes might try to do something not covered by the shaded text. There's little they can do about the spice-heads who are playing bumper ships outside. It doesn't become clear that someone may be on mind-altering



substances until they've already docked. Beyond that, they may want to converse with the Trandoshans. The trio are brothers named Xydge, Rydge, and Stydge. Chiefs of security for Distraction, they have traveled with the band for over a year. None of them have observed anything out of the ordinary at recent concerts; some people have died, but that's not uncommon at large gatherings in the Outer Rim. If the heroes are uncomfortable with that reality, Stydge suggests that they may be in the wrong line of work. The Trandoshans have not seen anyone matching Cories's description. Finally, a hero can try to learn the access code by peeking over Rydge's shoulder as he punches the keypad (DC 23 Spot check). But Xydge and Stydge get Sense Motive checks (opposed by the Bluff check of the hero trying to see the code) to realize what's going on; all three Trandoshans have a +9 bonus to Sense Motive checks.

Inside the room are Zim Zimley, Ushka Et, Enni Anni, Va'Lonis, and Tzeel. Descriptions of each individual, what they do, and what they know appear below. The band and Zim are happy to have the heroes present. They want to know who the heroes are, why they've been hired ("What good are you for security?"), and anything else that can be taken care of in a few minutes' time. Basically, though, the band is bored, sitting around and waiting for the show to start. By the time the meeting concludes, the concert is 6 hours away.

Zim Zimley

Male Bith, manager of Distraction. Zimley is concerned with money above all else. "The show must go on" is his mantra; the heroes will find it exceedingly difficult to convince Zimley to postpone the concert for any reason. Distraction is his meal ticket, and if anything were to happen to them, he would be ruined. He speaks in a high, nasal voice, interrupts when it pleases him, and gets bored far too easily. Key skill modifiers: Bluff +13, Diplomacy +20 (+23 if he's buying or selling something illegal), Listen +8, Sense Motive +14, Spot +8. Runs and hides at the first sign of combat.

Ushka Et

Female Devaronian, lead singer of Distraction. Ushka has had half her face tattooed to look like she was in a horribly disfiguring accident from a distance, but up close, she's actually very attractive. She tends to turn the tattooed side of her face away from individuals to whom she is speaking and is very self-conscious about what she's done for the sake of attention. She's not ashamed of it, but she prefers that people not stare at her tattoos unless she's performing. She's soft-spoken and enjoys Rodian ale over ice, which she drinks with a sprig of something green in it. She zones out completely if anyone mentions violence at Distraction's shows, humming softly to herself until the subject is changed.

Enni Anni

Male Herglic, kloo horn player for Distraction. Enni is known both for his bizarre musical style (he inserts the kloo horn in his blowhole and plays while destroying pieces of the set with one hand) and his compulsive fidgeting. He has a hard time sitting still, quickly growing bored with any conversation that doesn't involve playing music or breaking

things. He tends to encourage violence at Distraction shows merely by being present. He's not exactly a font of information; quite to the contrary, he pays little attention to anything that goes on outside his own head.

Va'Lonis

Male Tarasin, keyboardist for Distraction. The inclusion of a Tarasin in any band means one of two things: Either the Tarasin is exceptional, well outside the norms for his (tone-deaf) species, or the band has a bizarre, avant-garde sound and actually enjoys the discordant bleets, braaps, and clicks that Tarasin music frequently contains. In this case, Va'Lonis could not be more tone-deaf if he were a tree stump. He has an ego the size of a Hutt's lunch budget and believes he knows what's best for the band much better than Zimley. He also claims knowledge of almost anything, from the whereabouts of Niklas Cories ("His name gives him away, of course; he's on *Coriesant*. It's named for his family, you know.") to the existence of a pair of Sith training academies ("There are two academies, of course; that's what the legend means, two Sith academies. One of them is the Master Academy, the other is the Apprentice Academy. Leave it to the Jedi to misinterpret something so obvious."). He's a blowhard. He often has trouble finding his own head-fan with both hands.

Tzeel

Female Human, percussionist for Distraction. Tzeel wears white make-up caked all over her face. This makes her face glow when the lights are on her during concerts, and she loves the effect. She loves it so much, in fact, that she never takes the make-up off. She speaks in jerky words and motions frequently with her hands. Watching her is like watching someone play drums on a living creature. She's fairly disconcerting.

Scene 2: Backstage Pass

While waiting for the concert to begin, the heroes can make whatever preparations they want. They receive full cooperation from the Trandoshans (as long as the heroes make it clear that they know who's in charge) and have free rein to implement whatever elaborate scheme they concoct.

The heroes have full access to the security system and can read all of Distraction's personnel files with a DC 17 Computer Use check. There are no records of anyone named "Niklas Cories" or anything similar in the band's personnel files. Each of the 73 members of Distraction's touring entourage has an individual file that the heroes can peruse. This file contains a picture of each person, and none of the pictures match Cories. But a DC 28 Computer Use check reveals that all images have been updated within the last three days, and the old files have been purged with no trace remaining. Individuals perusing the files may notice (DC 16 Spot check) that the images sometimes do not correspond to the species described. Enni Anni's file, for example, includes a picture of a Woostoid rather than a Herglic. In fact, each band member's file contains an incorrect picture.

This is part of Cories's plan to confuse anyone who might be trying to find him. To protect his identity, he had someone slice the computer system and change the images in

every personnel file. Given that he's about to terminate his employment with Distraction once he takes care of Aquella, he is being as careful as he can about covering his tracks.

It takes some work, but the heroes can locate every individual in the personnel file except for six. One is Xydge. He is currently escorting four individuals named Veris, Gindo, Essara, and Rossi Kildaon off-ship. Those four are the public appearance doubles for the members of Distraction—a tattooed female Human (with surgery to make her look like a Devaronian), a Herglic, a Tarasin, and a white-faced Human. The sixth missing individual is a Human male named Aphus Polix who was hired three months ago as an instrument-handler and who has done some work on the band's pyrotechnics and security system.

Murderous Misdirection

Polix's quarters are in the cargo freighter that hauls Distraction's equipment. If the heroes enter, the scene is gruesome. Someone was killed here, the body destroyed with a thermal detonator. Because of the extensive sound-proofing and thick hull of the freighter, and because everyone has been aboard the *Sleemo* preparing for the show, no one heard the blast.

Searching the scene (DC 25 Search check) allows the heroes to find a smashed datapad in one corner. It can be fixed well enough to play back the most important contents (DC 29 Repair check), a recording from a security camera aboard the *Sleemo*. There is no sound.

A woman with a ghost-white face sits atop a crate, twirling percussion sticks. From behind her, another individual appears—an exact duplicate of the first woman. The new arrival pulls a vibro-dagger from her belt and jabs it into the base of the first woman's skull. There's hardly a twitch as the woman drops her percussion sticks and collapses. The assassin pulls the dagger free, slips something into the dead body's pocket, and tosses her into the airlock. The door slides shut, the airlock expels the body, and you see an explosion through the airlock's window. The screen goes blank.

Cories wanted the heroes to deduce that Tzeel had been killed and replaced by her public-appearance double, Rossi Kildaon, who could take Tzeel's place onstage and be in a prime position to kill anyone in the audience. But this is a misdirection. Cories actually disguised himself as Tzeel, killed the double, and dumped the body out the airlock, making sure to capture it all on a lone security camera. (This feed can be accessed through the regular security system on the ship with a DC 25 Computer Use check once the heroes know what they're looking for.) He then killed Ushka Et's Human double, Veris, and blew her body up in his own quarters, where no security camera was present. A medically skilled hero can identify (DC 25 Treat Injury check or Knowledge [Anatomy or related skill] check) that the corpse in Polix's room is not male and so could not be Polix.

Lastly, Cories modified Xydge's transmission log to make it seem as though the Trandoshan escorted all four public-appearance doubles off the ship. In reality, Xydge only had three doubles with him. Tzeel's double never showed up for the "smile and wave at the docking ships" tour. Cories himself took Veris's place on that run, but by the time the

heroes realize that someone was missing and start to piece things together, the doubles and Xydge are back on board. Perhaps more troubling, the band didn't feel like waiting any more and decided to make their fans happy. They've started their concert an hour early.

Scene 3: Concerto in Red

Getting through the throng of people backstage is a challenge. Going through the crowd would be almost impossible. To gain stage access, the heroes could try to bowl over crew and fans (DC 17 Strength check) or talk their way through (DC 23 Diplomacy check). Pulling weapons is an option, but a good chunk of the audience has concealed weapons as well, and starting a riot would be a bad thing. (Treat any concert-going combatants as low-level thugs and use the stats in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook.)

When the heroes reach a point where they can see the stage, everyone needs to make Spot checks (DC 18). Anyone who succeeds should be taken aside and presented with the following information.

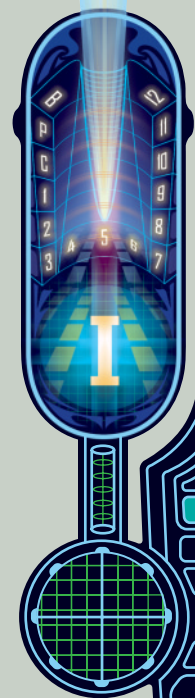
As you watch, the Devaronian singer casts a worried glance over her shoulder at the percussionist. Tzeel flails wildly, and the rhythm doesn't correspond at all to the music being played by the rest of the band.

Any heroes who get a result of 30 or more on their Spot checks manage to overcome the DC of Cories's Disguise check and realize that the lead singer is *not* Ushka Et, but instead is a thin Human, probably male, made up to look like a Devaronian. The real Ushka Et is bound and unconscious in one of the numerous ships that docked with the *Sleemo* to offload passengers for the concert.

If the drummer seems the most suspicious, the heroes may attempt to subdue her first. However, the drummer really *is* Tzeel; she just happens to be hopped up on spice and isn't playing very well right now. Cories had planned on this—he made sure Tzeel got the spice prior to the show—but he hadn't realized that in learning Distraction's music, he often counted on the percussionist for cues. Now he's forced to refer to a datapad embedded in his microphone stand to keep up, and he's having some trouble.

How the heroes handle this depends on whether they conclude that Cories is masquerading as Tzeel, is masquerading as Ushka Et, or is somewhere else entirely. If they rush the stage and take down the drummer, Ushka/Cories is gone by the time they turn around and look. It's easy to verify that Tzeel actually is who she claims to be. It's also easy to find the pretender; Cories is shoulder-surfing the crowd, a thermal detonator clutched in one raised hand. If the heroes go straight for Cories, things get dicey, as a firefight in front of a typical Distraction crowd is similar in many respects to an arena battle on Geonosis—except that the audience is armed.

Aquella Firth (if needed, use the stats for the Low-Level Administrator in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook) is in the front row. Given a chance, Cories lobbs a thermal detonator on a six-second delay in her direction, though he doesn't do this until he feels threatened by



the heroes. The six-second delay is because he knows that anything a member of Distraction throws into the crowd immediately becomes an object of desire, and his sense of irony finds the idea of people scuffling over a thermal detonator appealing. This also means that the heroes have a round's worth of actions to remove the detonator or otherwise stop it from going off and killing Aquella. (During that round, the detonator is not treated as "held" by anyone, so the easiest thing to do is simply use Move Object to get it away from the crowd.)

Niklas Cories, Male Human Scoundrel 4/Soldier

4/Infiltrator 4: Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 20 (+2 Dex, +8 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 84/12; Atk +8/+3 melee (2d6-1, vibroblade) or +11/+6 ranged (3d6 or stun DC 15, blaster pistol) or +11 ranged (8d6+6, thermal detonator); SQ Ambush, covert movement (full speed), illicit barter, lucky (1/day), precise attack +1, skill mastery (Disable Device), sneak attack +1d6; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +6; SZ M; FP 1; DSP 9; Rep +2; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16. Challenge Code E.

Equipment: Blaster pistol, thermal detonator x 5, comlink, datapad, Devaronian disguise.

Skills: Balance +16, Bluff +19, Computer Use +9, Demolitions +22, Disable Device +9, Disguise +15, Entertain (singer) +5, Escape Artist +7, Forgery +4, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (music) +3, Knowledge (streetwise) +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +17, Repair +6, Search +5, Spot +7, Tumble +6, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Devaronian, Speak Basic, Speak Devaronian, Speak Herglic, Speak Jawa Trade Language.

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Cautious, Dodge, Heroic Surge (3/day), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Persuasive, Quick Draw, Skill Emphasis (Demolitions, Disguise), Stealthy, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, blaster rifles, heavy weapons, simple weapons, vibro weapons).

Scene 4: Curtain Call

No matter how they resolve the situation with Cories, the heroes have one other problem to handle. The concert's finale includes an enormous pyrotechnic display. If the characters investigate the pyrotechnics, they find (DC 20 Demolitions check) that someone has wired four thermal detonators into each of the flash-pots at the corners of the stage. In addition, a string of detonators has been rigged across the catwalks that crisscross the ceiling of the hall. All of the explosives have been made up to look like standard concert pyro.

Cories planted a total of 32 detonators: four in each of the four flash-pots and 16 strung along the ceiling. Locating all 32 requires a DC 28 Search check. The heroes can disable each flash-pot detonator with a DC 32 Disable Device check, but failing even one check activates a

countdown that gives the characters 24 seconds (4 rounds) to disable all detonators in that particular flash-pot before they explode. The other 16 detonators can be disabled by making three separate DC 20 Disable Device checks.

If the heroes aren't inclined to look for the pyro after subduing Cories, give the most explosive-minded of the group an Intelligence check (DC 12) to realize that this may have been too easy, and perhaps they should be looking for more explosives. Failing to think of this can lead to extra opportunities for heroics as girders come crashing down toward the crowd and Cories (if alive) howls with sick glee. Cories is insane, not suicidal. The structural damage done to the *Seemo* is internal but substantial, and a squad of Hutt enforcers arrives within 2d4 minutes. Use stats from the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook appropriate to the heroes' prior interactions with Hutts (if any).

One More Search

Cories won't reveal what he did with the real Ushka Et. However, a focused search of the security files for the last two hours (DC 25 Search check or Computer Use check) reveals an image of someone tossing Et's limp body into a ship that is still docked with the *Sleemo*. Et is still aboard that ship, alive but unconscious.

Wrapping Up

The primary job of the heroes was to keep Aquella Firth safe. Once they've captured or killed Cories and located Ushka Et, the concert continues. Aquella remains in the front row, where she's been all along. She's a smiling, round-faced girl who may never realize how close she came to getting killed.

What the heroes do with Cories is up to them. The Hutts would love to have him, and they may insist on getting custody if his thermal detonators damaged their ship. Quoltus has a few ideas about what to do with the assassin as well. In addition, the heroes can turn Cories over to any other legitimate (or illegitimate) body. It's also possible that Cories died or managed to escape. But as long as Aquella survived, Quoltus doesn't really care what happened to the assassin. His daughter is, and will always be, his main concern.

About the Author

Morrie Mullins is a psychology professor who saw *Star Wars* in theaters in 1977 and fell hopelessly in love. He began playing RPGs in elementary school and started writing for the RPGA in 1999, culminating in a two-year stint as Plot Director for the Living Force campaign. He has written over 20 modules for the RPGA and contributed extensively to the *Living Force Campaign Guide*. Currently, he teaches and does research during the day, does freelance and other writing at night, and is firmly convinced that sleep is a crutch.